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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information

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ON THE FAMINE FRONT

Reserve Following are excerpts from recent issues of the FAMINE CAMPAIGN ROUNDUP issued by the PMA Information Service. This is background information that may be used in press and radio releases, in speeches or any other form desired. The excerpts include:

THE FACE OF FAMINE---Human interest stories of what lack of food does to people and countries.

REPORTS FROM ABROAD---Brief reports on the situation found in Europe by Herbert Hoover and by press correspondents.

WHAT'S DOING AT HOME---This includes information on such famine campaign issues as: what's a calorie, shall we feed livestock or people.

THE FACE OF FAMINE

THE CRIES OF TWO CHILDREN. A healthy, hungry child puckers up his face and voices a hearty, full lunged cry for nourishment. And a harried mother, burdened with household tasks, quiets the cry with its regular feeding. Sometimes she frets a bit because the baby is a half hour or an hour off schedule.

That's America.

An ailing, starving child, too weak to cry, makes just a mewling little noise. His despairing and equally hungry mother can do nothing. There is no regularly scheduled feeding to silence that plaintive sound. There never has been a regular feeding schedule in that child's lifetime.

That's Europe.

Can you hear that cry and fail to answer it?

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MEN WILL KILL FOR FOOD. About 1,000 unemployed, many of them former soldiers, looted warehouses of cheese, sausages, and other foodstuffs at Foggia, Italy.

Then they marched to a railroad station and stormed a train loaded with wares, killed and wounded several travelers.

Black marketeers took command of the train, and with sub-machine guns, forced the crew to proceed to Bari. Stopping three times on the way, they looted villages of foodstuffs and clothing to make up for what they had lost on board.

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MAY 10 1946

EVEN ENGLISH DIETS INADEQUATE. Usually, England is looked upon -- as in fact it is -- as one of the most fortunate nations in Europe from a food standpoint. But even in the "tight little Isle" food supplies are at a bare minimum, according to a Washington war bride, Mrs. J. J. Libert.

"I haven't had my hair cut in four years -- it just hasn't grown because of deficiencies in my diet," was her summary of the English food situation.

The English diet at present is even stricter than during the war, she said. As a result "people are always tired."

The present English ration for one person to last one week is: 3 ounces of bacon; 3 ounces of cheese, 2 ounces of tea; 2 ounces of butter and of margarine, one ounce of fat, 8 ounces of sugar, half pound of meat. Milk is available at the rate of half a pint per day, and each person gets one egg every two or three weeks.

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THE AVERAGE FOOD RATION IN VIENNA, celebrated in story and song as a city of gaiety, has dropped to a near-starvation level of less than 900 calories a day, according to an UNRRA investigating committee.

Stores are empty, and money is practically worthless since there is little to buy except at fantastic black market prices, the committee said in an article appearing in the New York Times.

In neighboring Czechoslovakia, the UNRRA investigators found peasants pulling their own plows in their frantic efforts to plant crops. A main part of their diet is thin barley gruel.

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CHINESE SITUATION DESPERATE. Tree bark, weeds, cottonseed hulls, are being eaten by starving Chinese in an effort to sustain life, said Dr. Raymond T. Moyer, of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, upon his recent return from China.

The eating of mud has been reported from some famine areas and elm leaves are another item of diet, according to Dr. Moyer, who is Chief of OFAR's Far Eastern Division.

"We found most of the people sunk in apathy, their faces gray and drawn," he said, in describing a trip through Honan province. They had returned from the mountains -- where they were driven by the Japs -- to find their homes and fields burned. It was winter and they had only summer clothing, no food, no bedding, no shelter. Some were in the fields picking weeds. Many of them must be dead by now."

Country areas are in general worse hit than the cities, Dr. Moyer said, though bodies of those who had died of the combined effects of malnutrition and disease were often found on Shanghai streets.

Malaria is proving fatal to Chinese men and women weakened by lack of food. Typhoid, typhus, and dysentery are prevalent and smallpox is also found, according to the OFAR representative.

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COMPETING WITH DOGS. It was all in a day's work, the American soldier bitterly concluded as he watched the old Belgian lady systematically go about her rifling of the garbage can in Antwerp. Not only today and yesterday, but tomorrow and for a great many tomorrows....tomorrows that made up the whole of the foreseeable future. But what made it all the worse was the presence of the lean and mangy dog that was competing with the aged woman for the potato peels and the already well-gnawed bones. Neither dog nor woman paid attention to the presence of the other -- both were on the same level of starvation.

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FEW CHILDREN. There weren't many children of less than three years to be seen in either Belgium or Holland, GI's told each other in some surprise, and then they wondered where they had gone.....but not for long, because a little reflection on facts known to every soldier told the story. Most of them were either confined to their hovel-like homes because they lacked the energy and strength to play in the streets and fields, or dead. The death rate among the new-born babies is high, but also hard hit are two other elements in the population -- the old and the youngsters. Many of the next generation who do manage somehow to survive will live out short spans of life as stunted adults.

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NOT MONEY-BUT FOOD. You can buy wooden shoes in Antwerp. Wizen little old men of eight or nine years sell them -- in front of Army bivouac areas where live the people with money and food. But they don't want to sell for money -- the money that so often can buy nothing with which to sustain life -- they want to sell for food. A candy bar. A K-ration box will buy quite a few shoes. Not that money isn't of value -- some value. You can use it to buy potato peels. If you can find the peels.

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(Source for 3 preceding items: Lt. James Keegan, USDA employee who saw war service with Quartermaster Corps in Belgium and Holland.)

MAY 16 '46

REPORTS FROM ABROAD

In his most recent report from Europe, Herbert Hoover again emphasizes the certainty of "widespread starvation during the next three months" if America's famine campaign bogs down.

POLAND'S situation was described as "very unsatisfactory." There is a strong chance much spring seed will be eaten as food. Cereal rations have been cut almost one-third. Imports of 80,000 tons of cereals needed each month to maintain even the short supply. Complicating this picture is a short potato crop. Fats, too, are short. Imports of 34,000 tons will be needed during the year to maintain an already scant ration.

There is a strong black market in Poland. Some consumers have no ration coupons and must rely on "free supplies" whose "legal availability" makes rationing and distribution a tough problem.

FINLAND needs both cereals and fats to continue sharply reduced rations. Milk is needed badly for the children.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S supplies of cereals and fats are low, though there is enough sugar. Cereals will last until about mid-May. Bread rations have been cut. The fat ration is less than two-thirds of the authorized level.

SWITZERLAND has rations enough to continue pre-war health standards, even though fat and cereal supplies are less than in six years. There is milk for children and a small amount for adults.

The Hoover report highlights the fact that people of these countries, except the Swiss, are showing the effects of hunger -- particularly the children. In one of them, 25 out of every 100 newborn babies are dying. Tuberculosis is spreading rapidly.

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Here in brief are reports of the ministers on the food situations in their countries as reported by the Associated Press:

Italy -- Wheat supply exhausted. Average daily ration 1000 calories. "We have starvation today in Italy."

Belgium -- Wheat supplies until mid-May. "So grave...our whole recovery may be jeopardized."

Eire -- Only European country able to send meat to neighbors, but needs 30,000 tons of wheat until harvest.

Greece -- Daily ration reduced to 950 calories in March and further cuts feared in May. Livestock and seed supplies wiped out by Nazis.

Austria -- Average daily ration is 1200 calories, but it is only 900 in some districts because of lack of transportation.

France -- "Grave situation." Germans killed livestock and damaged farms.

Portugal -- "Serious food situation." Extraction rate 90 to 96 percent.

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SHALL WE FEED PEOPLE OR LIVESTOCK? Millions of people around the world face death by starvation right now.

Wheat shipped now will keep them alive. Wheat or its by-products fed to livestock won't produce food for export for several weeks or months.

In a nutshell, that's the big "why" behind the Government orders which require 80 percent extraction of flour from wheat milled for flour and which limits use of wheat. Of course, that means less by-product feed for cattle, hogs, and poultry.

But a bushel of wheat goes much further as human food than as livestock feed. And human hunger comes first in the famine emergency.

Incidentally, many Americans without knowing it have started to eat the new "dark" bread which is made from 80 percent extraction flour. The actual difference in color or taste is hardly noticeable.

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HOW MANY CALORIES? A calory is the unit that indicates the heat and energy producing value of food.

In measuring the diet of an American army camp over a period of thirty days, the average was found to be 3,944 calories for each man day. In the Navy, the calories for each man were found to be 4,178 on a battleship, 3,878 on a carrier, and 3,847 on shore station.

Undernourishment begins at 2,000 calories a day. Dangerous malnutrition begins at 1,600 calories, and death from starvation results at 800 calories.

In the Santo Tomas prison camp in Manila, the Japanese were issuing 1,500 calories daily for each person in February, 1944. By October of the same year, the diet was down to 800 or 900 calories a day, and by the time Manila was liberated, there was an average of three to four deaths a day among the prisoners, due mostly from malnutrition.

Today in India, people get 960 calories a day. In the fall of 1945, the people of Albania were already on an average diet of about 1,000 calories a day. The urban population in half of Europe is existing on less than 2,000 calories, and in some areas, less than 1,500 calories a day.

And in America, our average daily food consumption is 3,300 calories.

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"SAVING" FATS AND OILS. Because the word "saving" is sometimes used loosely in the drive to conserve fats and oils, some people have taken it to mean "saving and turning in to the butcher."

Perhaps "saving" was the wrong word to use -- "conserving" might have been better. Let's just take, for example, a family that conserves, by using and re-using bacon grease, one tablespoon of fat per day.

They don't take that tablespoon of fat out of the "store boughten" lard or shortening. Therefore they buy less cooking fat.

And one tablespoon per day adds up to one pound per month. One pound less from the store, multiplied by the number of families in the United States, means the storekeepers don't have to buy several million pounds of fats and oils. The jobbers don't have to buy so much. The wholesalers don't buy so much. And back at the source these millions of pounds of fats and oils per month could be shipped to the famine-stricken countries of the world.

So even a tablespoon a day becomes a big item!

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PLENTIFUL FOODS. Here are highlights on the two groups of foods -- plentiful fruits and vegetables, and one on fresh and frozen fish (excluding shellfish) -which will be plentiful for the next few weeks.

Frozen and Fresh Fish (excluding shellfish) -- Storage stocks of frozen fish continue at an all-time high. Landings of fresh fish are termed "satisfactory to high." Distribution is no problem; you should find fish in almost every market that customarily handles them.

Potatoes -- Plentiful supplies of old potatoes. The new crops prospects are good. Early harvest is beginning now.

Fresh Citrus Fruits -- Oranges, grapefruit and lemons are expected to be plentiful in April and May. The quality is good.

Carrots -- Acreage in California and Arizona, main producing States, is 56% above 1935-44 average, and 5 percent above last year. Supply for April and May will be somewhat ahead of demand.

Lettuce -- On account of large supplies, lettuce prices have fallen below ceiling. This plentiful situation is expected to last for several months. Early acreage in California and Arizona expected to be 10 percent above last year.

Others -- Prospects for radishes, scallions, rhubarb, kale and spinach are also in the bountiful column.

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FARMERS OFFER WHEAT AS GIFT. The desire of wheat growers to go all-out in the battle against famine prompted the Commodity Credit Corporation to agree to accept gift offers of wheat for emergency foreign food use.

Farm groups in Oklahoma, Minnesota, and in certain other sections of the wheat producing area have asked to be allowed to present gifts of wheat for shipment abroad.

In answer to these requests, CCC will use its facilities to accept wheat without payment in not less than carload lots. UNRRA will bear the expense of transporting and loading the wheat for shipment to hunger-ridden countries.

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